

10/14/72

Dear Josh, Your letter of October 11 and the copy of Alby's very useful paper which you enclosed put the questions you ask about Harriett Taylor in a clearer light. I have doubts that I shall be able to answer them from documents since apparently all of my correspondence with students was kept with department matters (I was then executive officer) and cannot now be found. Nor does Harriett's name appear in the index of my correspondence which is now in the APS library. But, I shall hunt when next I go to Columbia library for her dissertation & notes and I will also go at an ex department secretary to see what became of department papers of that era.

On only a few questions will I trust my memory. 1) Harriett came to work on developmental genetics in my lab - but during my absence one term she got interested in yeast & called me to a new room she had acquired on 10th floor

near Ryan's to show me material & observations she
had already made. I believe I said I could be of
little help with such a problem - but felt that students
should be free to choose sponsor or problems (either sponsor
or first) She didn't ask for other sponsorship, but
just went ahead largely on her own. I'm sure she
must have talked with Francis. I have no memory
of how she found an interest in yeast - later it
crossed my mind it might have come via Boris.
What is certain is that long afterward she & Boris
came together to enquire how she could get her
degree awarded, something in which she herself
had no great interest. I told them the University
& ^{Faculty} ^{Requirements} maintained the requirement that after all
other conditions had been met the final & necessary
one was publication in an acceptable journal.
As I recall Boris said "Then Harriett let us publish
But if it happened I don't know; that's a question
to be settled from faculty records with the dean's office.
(George Wald as I remember, was for long in
the same position - if ⁱⁿ limbo, then not suffering for it)

I recall no relationship with Delia Hackett. She probably spent one summer at Cold Spring Harbor as genetics students often did since we had one (or two) scholarships there. I believe that's where Bryson got interested in microbiology & perhaps it was the same in Harriett's case.

But how Avery's work was transmitted I don't know. She certainly understood the problems consequent upon DNA as transformant - Her 1951 CSH Sympo paper shows that clearly - but if she told you about Avery it must have been soon after the 1944 paper was published. I don't believe we had discussed that ^{paper} in seminar until two or more years later. I tried just now to reach Harriett's ~~former~~ ^{friend of that time} graduate student - Reba Mirsky - but she's apparently away. Mirsky may just possibly have been the liaison in this case. (Reba, I believe, was somewhat later than Harriett as graduate student)

All send you news as I get it - but I think it must come from written records
Good luck to your memoir
with love
L.H.